

The CARES Act Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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Direct Assistance Payments

Who is eligible, and when and how are direct assistance payments from the CARES Act going to be sent to individuals?

1. If you made less than \$75,000 in 2019, you will be eligible for a one-time direct assistance payment of \$1,200. Couples who filed jointly and made less than \$150,000 will get \$2,400.
2. Additionally, taxpayers with children age 17 and under will receive an additional \$500 for each child.
3. At the end of April, the IRS is expected to start using direct deposit for direct assistance payments. The IRS is creating a website so that Americans can share their banking information and receive direct deposits as opposed to checks in the mail.

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Do I qualify for a direct assistance payment if I haven't submitted income taxes because I don't make enough money?

1. Social Security recipients will get their direct assistance payment without having to take any further action.
2. However, other households that do not normally file taxes must do so in order to receive direct assistance. The deadline to file taxes has been extended to July 15. You can find more information on the [IRS website](#).

Will I receive a direct assistance payment if I was listed as a dependent on a 2019 tax return?

1. Families with dependent children age 17 and under will receive an additional \$500 for each child.
2. You must be 18 years or older and file your own income taxes in 2019 to receive the \$1,200 direct assistance payment.

If I have unpaid taxes, will I get a full direct assistance payment or will taxes be taken out of it?

1. Unpaid taxes will not be subtracted from the direct assistance payment.

Do I have to pay taxes on my direct assistance payment?

1. No, the relief check is **not** subject to federal taxation

Will the direct payment check be taken out of your tax refunds for next year?

1. No, the relief check is **not** subject to federal taxation

If you are caring for an elderly parent or disabled adult do they qualify for the \$500 dependent direct payment?

1. At this time, adults who are listed as a dependent on someone else's tax returns are not eligible for a direct assistance payment. This includes elderly adults and children over the age of 17 as well.
2. Elderly and disabled adults who are not listed as someone else's dependent should be eligible to receive their own direct assistance payment.

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Will individuals who receive Social Security benefits, including Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), be eligible for a direct assistance payment? What about individuals who receive Supplement Security Income (SSI)?

1. Yes. All adults who are U.S. residents with a Social Security number, are not claimed as a dependent by someone else, and do not fall above the income phaseout ranges are eligible for the 2020 relief checks enacted by the CARES Act. This includes Social Security beneficiaries as well as SSI recipients.
2. For most Americans, these direct assistance payments will be based on your most recent tax return. If you have already filed your 2019 tax return, the IRS will use that information. If not, they will use your 2018 tax returns.
3. However, if you receive Social Security retirement or disability benefits, then the IRS can use the information from your Social Security Benefit Statement to send you a relief check, even if you haven't filed a tax return.
4. If you receive another form of non-taxable income, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or VA disability benefits, and have not filed a tax return in 2019 or 2018, then the IRS may not have a process in place to send you a relief check.
5. **You are still eligible to receive a direct assistance payment.** However, in order to receive it, you will need to file a 2019 tax return by the new federal deadline of July 15, 2020.

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Small Businesses and Non-Profits

I am a small business owner impacted by COVID-19 and want to apply for federal assistance. What resources are available?

1. There are federal assistance programs available to small businesses impacted by COVID-19, including the **Paycheck Protection Program**, **Small Business Administration (SBA) Disaster Loans** and **Emergency Economic Injury Grants**.
2. Find more financial assistance information on [SBA's website](#).

Does the CARES Act cover relief or assistance for "gig" workers, self-employed people or freelancers?

1. Yes.

How should barbers, stylists, real estate agents, independent attorneys, etc. access benefits made available by the CARES Act? Should they apply for unemployment, small business assistance or both?

1. Self-employed individuals, small business owners and independent contractors can apply for small business assistance from the following programs: **Emergency Economic Injury Grant**, the **Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL)** program and the **Paycheck Protection Program**.
2. Please see the [SBA's website](#) for further information.
3. **The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance** is also available to independent contractors, self-employed individuals or "gig" workers whose operations cease due to COVID-19.
4. Please see the websites of the [Alabama Department of Labor](#) and [U.S. Department of Labor](#) for further information.

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Are non-profits eligible for benefits under the CARES Act? If so, how can they be accessed?

1. Yes, all 501(c)(3) non-profits with 500 employees or fewer are eligible to take advantage of the **Emergency Economic Injury Grant**, the **Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL)** program and the **Paycheck Protection Program** through the Small Business Association (SBA).
2. Please see the [SBA's website](#) for further information.

Are there any resources available for churches?

1. Yes. Private non-profits with the IRS tax status of 501 (c), (d) or (e) are eligible to access grants and loans at the SBA.
2. Please see the [SBA's website](#) for further information.

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States and Local Governments

What benefits are in the CARES Act for local governments?

1. State and local governments will receive funds from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to combat the effects of COVID-19.
2. Each state will receive at least \$1.25 billion from the Relief Fund. **Using Census data, the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that Alabama will receive \$1.9 billion.**
3. Additionally, the CARES Act provides an additional \$5 billion for Community Block Development Grants.

How do small cities (under 500,000 people) access relief funds?

1. Localities with fewer than 500,000 people must work with their state government to access funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund.

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Unemployment

Where can I get help if I am having trouble applying via the Alabama unemployment insurance website?

1. Currently, there are no other ways to apply on the website. The Alabama Department of Labor announced on Facebook that it hopes to have updated guidance regarding new programs included in the CARES Act, specifically instructions on when self-employed workers can file for unemployment, when the additional \$600 benefit will be available, and information regarding extensions.
2. One possibility may be to apply for unemployment benefits during off-peak hours, such as in the late evening hours or early morning hours. Another possibility may be to try to apply on a different weekday.
3. Please see the [Alabama Department of Labor's website](#) for further information.
4. The phone number for the Alabama Department of Labor is 1-866-234-5382.

I have been asked to use my personal vacation time during this period when I am not allowed to work, rather than being laid off or furloughed. Can I get paid back for my vacation time under the CARES Act if my employer applies for federal assistance?

1. Whether the vacation leave used during the current public health emergency would be restored is determined by your employer's policy.
2. Employers may not require employees to use other paid leave (like vacation time) before using the emergency paid sick leave (FFCRA, Division E, Sec. 5102 (e)) for a qualifying emergency sick leave use.

Will I receive the direct cash assistance payment if I am also on unemployment?

1. Yes. [1] The \$600 weekly benefit is called the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Fund (PUAF).
2. The \$600 payment is available through July 31, 2020, on a weekly basis.

[1] Vox: The coronavirus unemployment insurance plan, explained

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I am an individual at high-risk of COVID-19 and am being asked to return to work. What protections exist for individuals who have been advised not to return to work due to their health status or age? What will happen to my income and health insurance if I lose my job?

1. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provided many workers with up to two weeks of fully or partially paid sick leave if they are unable to work due to a COVID-19 related reason.
2. These reasons include being advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine or being subject to a local quarantine or isolation order.
3. Employers may not discharge, discipline, or otherwise discriminate against any eligible employee who takes this paid sick leave. Information about these paid sick leave requirements and eligibility can be found [here](#).
4. The CARES Act also created additional supports for individuals who lose their jobs during this global crisis, including changing the criteria for claiming unemployment to include many reasons related to COVID-19 and providing an additional \$600 to every unemployment compensation check between now and July 31, and temporarily expand unemployment insurance to cover individuals who are not traditionally covered, including the self-employed, gig workers, independent contractors, and those with an irregular work history.
5. If you become unemployed and lose your employer-sponsored health insurance, you may be able to find affordable Marketplace coverage or qualify for Medicaid. Learn more about your options [here](#).

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Hospitals and Health Care Providers

What benefits are in the CARES Act for rural hospitals?

1. The CARES Act includes a \$100 billion fund to cover non-reimbursable expenses attributable to COVID-19, such as building or retrofitting new ICUs, increased staffing or training, personal protective equipment, and more.
2. The CARES Act also allows small businesses and many 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, including hospitals, health systems, and health care providers, to apply for the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program. Through this program, hospitals and other providers can receive a loan of up to 250% of their average monthly payroll costs to cover eight weeks of payroll and help with other expenses like rent, mortgage payments, and utilities. This loan can be forgiven based on maintaining employee and salary levels.
3. To address cash flow concerns for hospitals, the CARES Act allows hospitals to receive accelerated payments under Medicare. Specifically, acute care hospitals, critical access hospitals (CAHs), children's hospitals, and prospective payment system-exempt cancer hospitals (PCHs) will be able to request accelerated Medicare payments for inpatient hospital services. Hospitals interested in receiving accelerated payments should contact their Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC). To learn which MAC to contact, please look [here](#).

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Higher Education

I am a college student whose classes have been canceled for the year. Can I get reimbursed for room and board, or other school-related costs?

1. Colleges and universities oversee and dictate the terms of their on-campus housing. You should have received guidance from your school regarding its policies related to housing and reimbursement. Students struggling should be in contact with student affairs to see if any help can be offered to them.
2. With the passage of the CARES Act, colleges and universities will receive funding and new flexibility to provide emergency financial aid grants to assist students for unexpected expenses they face as a result of COVID-19, including housing, food, child care, and the technology they need to succeed in distance learning.

What other relief is available for higher education students?

1. For more information on financial aid assistance, please visit my fact sheet for student loan borrowers:
<https://www.jones.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Student%20Assistance.pdf>

As a college student, am I eligible for a direct assistance check?

1. The CARES Act provides direct assistance payments to individuals and families based on 2019 federal income tax filings, or 2018 taxes if you have yet to file your 2019 income taxes.
2. For students who file their taxes as an independent and make less than \$75,000, you will be eligible for a one-time payment of \$1,200.
3. If you are married and your household income is less than \$150,000, your household will receive a one-time payment of \$2,400.
4. For students who are still claimed as a dependent, you will not be eligible to receive a direct assistance payment. However, if the person who claimed you in their tax filings qualifies, the household will receive financial assistance based on the information above.
5. More information is available here:
<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know>

The CARES Act Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Is there some relief available to school systems or local governments that are running low on funds providing meals to students?

1. The latest relief legislation passed by Congress creates an Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. The money will flow from the federal government to states who then will disburse among school districts. School districts are able to use these federal funds to plan and coordinate how they are able to provide meals to eligible students.
2. To find your local food bank, please visit: <https://alfba.org/need-help/>

For other questions, please find guidance from the U.S. Department of Education here: <https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/coronavirus>